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Watteau

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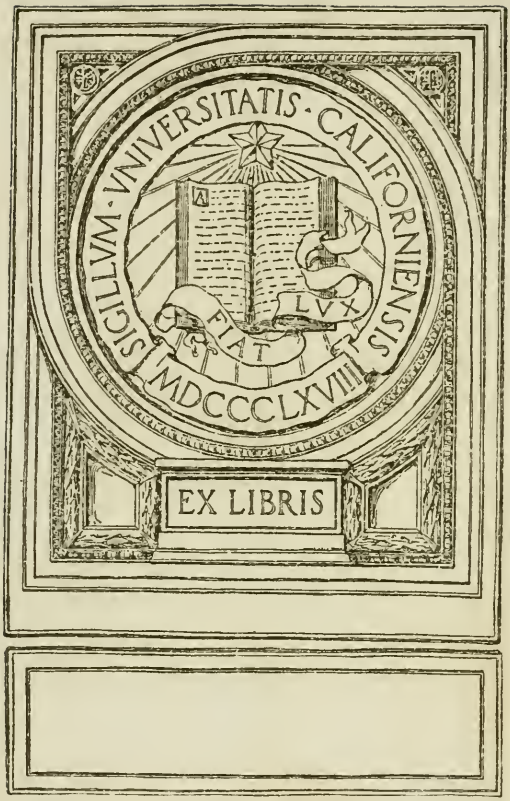
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MASTERPIECES
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EDITED BY - -
T. LEMAN HARE

WATTEAU

1684—1721

"Masterpieces in Colour" Series

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REYNOLDS.	S. L. Bensusan.
TURNER.	C. Lewis Hind.
ROMNEY.	C. Lewis Hind.
GREUZE.	Alys Eyre Macklin.
BOTTICELLI.	Henry B. Binns.
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DÜRER.	H. E. A. Furst.
MILLET.	Percy M. Turner.
WATTEAU.	C. Lewis Hind.
COROT.	Sidney Allnutt.

Others in Preparation.

PLATE I.—A PASTORAL. Frontispiece

(In the Louvre, Paris)

The attribution to Watteau of this pretty pastoral has been questioned. It is thus described in the Louvre catalogue, "At the foot of a knoll, a shepherdess, with a yellow dress and a red bodice, sits turning to the left, to listen to a shepherd, seen from the back, wearing pink breeches and a violet vest, who plays on the flute; on the right a sheep and a dog. Landscape in the background."

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Watteau

BY C. LEWIS HIND ❀ ❀ ❀

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR

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PROLOGUE

THE apparition of Watteau in France in the early eighteenth century may be likened to the apparition of Giotto in Italy in the early fourteenth. Each was a genius; each broke away from the herd; each gave to the world a new vision; each inspired a school. But there the resemblance ends. Giotto's art was Christian, Watteau's Pagan; or, in other

words, Giotto lived in an age when the aim of art was to teach religion, Watteau—well, his pictures were designed to delight. Giotto sought to remind men of Christianity, to bring them humbly to their knees with representations (marvellously fresh in those days when art was still groping in the Byzantine twilight) of the life of the Founder of Christianity, all its pathos, pity, and promise. Watteau gave joy and exhiliration to a generation temporally dull and morose, chilled by the academical art of the period, and apparently content with it. Watteau appeared: the little world about him looked at his pictures and, what a change! "Paris dressed, posed, picnicked, and conversed à la Watteau."

Poor Watteau! He gave, he gives joy, but he was sad, discontented, distrustful of himself and others. Sometimes Nature makes a great effort and unites genius to the sane mind and the sane body, as in a Titian, a Leonardo, a Shakespeare, a Goethe; more often she breathes genius into a fugitive and precarious shell, as in a Keats, a Francis Thompson, a Watteau, and ironically, or perhaps blessedly, gives them the phthisical temperament so that

PLATE II.—THE BALL UNDER A COLONNADE

(In the Dulwich Gallery)

This picture has suffered somewhat from time. But how delightful it is still; how gracious and debonair are the two dancing figures; how fascinating the colour in the woman's green striped rose skirt, and in the man's blue butterfly dress. There are seventy-three figures in this small canvas 1 ft. $7\frac{3}{4}$ ins. by 2 ft. $\frac{1}{4}$ ins.

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they crowd youth, adolescence, and age into a burst of hectic performances before they depart.

In the following pages the life and art of Watteau are considered, also the curious effect of that life and art upon his biographers, also, frightening word! his technique, his marvellous technique, which is a veritable tonic to painters, who know the almost intolerable difficulties of expression.

His life? Why, it could be told in a page. His art? It is all stated in any one of his significant pictures. He belonged to that class of unfortunates who are never at rest in this world. Life to him was a wandering to find home. Always beyond the hills, any place where he did not happen to be at the moment, gleamed the spires of the City of Happiness and Contentment, beckoning, waiting, rising against the sky like the towers of New Jerusalem in Taddeo di Bartoli's "Death of the Virgin." He fled from the boredom of his home in Valenciennes, yet he died longing to return.

Watteau revealed his temperament, on the wing as it were, in his masterpiece "The Embarkment for Cythera." These ethereal and butterfly pilgrims of love should be happy

enough in their enchanted garden on the border of the azure sea, but no! they are preparing lackadaisically to depart, to be wafted in the ship with the rose-coloured sail to the Island of Cythera, the abode of Venus, whom they worship for the joy of worship, without any desire of possession. On those lovely shores they will find no continuing city. Watteau knows that. Oh! but he was a cynic was this Watteau whose palette was a rainbow, and whose vision was like the flash of a kingfisher's wing in sunlight. Do you remember his "Fête Champêtre" at Dresden, with the little exquisite figure of a woman seated on the ground turning away from the spectator? Oh, her bright hair, and the dress—I am a man; but what a dress! What skill and knowledge in the drawing and painting of it! This little lady is essentially Watteau, who loved pretty clothes and budding figures, and whose drawing was as dainty as the frocks he composed; yet I do not think she is the real Watteau. Cast your eye to the left of the picture where stands an elderly, disdainful dandy. You meet this looker-on again and again in Watteau's pictures; he is in the Fête

Champêtre and yet not of it; he knows how little all this affectation of gaiety really signifies; how transient is this commerce with joy, and yet he lingers there because in Watteau's world there is naught else to do. Yet he himself was always doing—a great worker. He knew, like Zola, that work is the anodyne for the "malady of the infinite" or of self, whichever you like to call it; but he had no wish to teach. He used his art to escape from the world to a dream-realm, where the sun always shines and where Monday morning never comes.

What was he like, this "exquisite little master," restless, changeable, obstinate, irritable, and misanthropic, whose influence on art has been so great? In his portrait of himself engraved by Boucher, the slight, nervous figure, alert, on the point of a petulant outbreak, looks a genius, but a man "gey ill to live with." I have a keener if a sadder vision of him in a portrait drawn by himself, "frightfully thin, almost deathlike." It is called "Watteau Laughing." Frightfully thin, almost deathlike, himself drawn by himself—laughing. That is Watteau.

I

HIS LIFE

It should be an easy task to state the salient facts in the life of a world-renowned painter who lived but thirty-seven years, and who died in 1721; but until the discovery by the brothers De Goncourt, in a second-hand book-shop, of the life of Watteau, written by his friend the Comte de Caylus and read by him before the French Academy in 1748, our knowledge had to be gleaned mainly from the notes to catalogues of his collected works.

The little Flemish town of Valenciennes was ceded to France in 1677—seven years before a son was born to Jean Philippe Watteau and his wife Michelle Lardenoise. This son was baptized on the 10th of October 1684 and given the names of Jean Antoine. Jean Philippe, his father, was a tiler, desirous no doubt that his son should succeed him in his own sensible occupation; but discovering Jean Antoine's predilection for covering everything he could find with drawings, grotesque and otherwise, of the strolling players and mountebanks that

passed through the little town, he submitted to fate and placed him with the official painter of the municipality, named Gerin. Under him Watteau painted "La Vraie Gaieté," his first important attempt at a picture. This was followed by "Le Retour de Guingette," and then his master died. The year was 1701, the age of Watteau seventeen.

It may be said that with Gerin's death Watteau's boyhood died. His father, seeing little return for his expenditure, refused to continue to pay for instruction. Life at home became unbearable to the sensitive youth to whom his calling was as the call of the sea to the sailor-born.

If there was so much of interest in Valenciennes for a painter, what might not the capital offer of spectacular delights? So one morning Antoine left home and walked to Paris, where he found work with Métayer, a scene-painter; but Métayer's patronage soon ceased, and Watteau found himself alone in Paris. Now began his period of penury and the making of the master; also probably, through hunger and cold, the engendering of the disease, consumption, which was to force his genius to its

rapid development and from which he was to die. Paris, the marvellous Paris of his dreams, was beautiful, but without heart. Watteau strolled by her river's bank, crept for shelter into the great church of Notre-Dame, wandered out again, and at last found work of a kind that would at least keep him from starvation.

On the Pont Notre-Dame there were shops, exposing daubs, painted by the dozen, for sale. Necessity compelled and Watteau sought and obtained employment at one of these picture manufactories. He proved himself a facile workman, and soon his task became so easy that he could paint from memory the head of St. Nicolas, which it was his duty to repeat over and over again. The other journeymen artists painted skies, draperies, heads, hands, saints, angels, to each a set task, and the payment was proportionate to their skill. Watteau's remuneration for the week's work amounted to three livres—a little more than three francs—and a daily bowl of soup! A less determined youth than this weakling might have succumbed or renounced his ambitions, but Watteau worked and waited patiently until he could extricate himself from these uncongenial surroundings.

The future painter of dainty and luxurious visions of wealth and breeding was ambitious, if miserable.

He forgot to be hungry, because his hours of leisure from the tyranny of the picture manufactory were filled with the joy of drawing incessantly everything that passed before his eyes, from the turn of a head to the flutter of a tempestuous petticoat. A bowl of soup for dinner is an excellent aid to work, and this period no doubt intensified Watteau's love of work and of Nature. The lifeless things he had to copy at the manufactory sent him into the realms of the real, and his great gift of "seeing" was storing up for him innumerable observations which were to be the structure of his future fancies.

One lucky day Watteau met Claude Gillot, the decorative painter, who on seeing his drawings invited him to live in his house and become his pupil and assistant. So ended his period of absolute want; henceforward Watteau began to find himself, even as disease had already found and marked him.

Claude Gillot's influence upon the formation of Watteau's taste and talent must not be under-

rated. He was a man of much ability, quite unlike the cold and formal painters of his time. His was a gay art: the mythology of lovers and nymphs, and the light life of the Italian Comedy—Pantaloon, Columbine, and Pierrot—"strange motley—coloured family, clothed in sunshine and silken striped." Gillot is certainly one of Watteau's earliest inspirers: his revolt against convention (even if revolt be too strong a word) influenced Watteau to the end of his life. With this happy *rencontre* began the serious development of Watteau's art. Life, no longer sordid, became luxurious in thought and application. Supersensitive, the artist mind of the pupil touched and extracted the taste of his master, improved upon it, and strengthened its own tendency for all that was dainty, elegant, and whimsical. Gillot's was a good influence; a capable craftsman, he gave freely, but the jealous side of his nature soon recognised in his intuitive pupil not only an adaptation of his own methods, but also an improvement upon them. In Watteau, no doubt, he saw his own faults, but he also saw his own virtues made finer and rarer. Whatever the reason, over-much similarity of temperament, profes-

PLATE III.—L'INDIFFÉRENT

(In the Louvre, Paris)

Through Watteau's dream-world trips "L'Indifférent," rainbow-hued, mercurial, his indifference assumed, not troubling to conceal the sad thoughtfulness that lurks in his expression. Who can describe Watteau's colour or his fashion of trickling on the paint? The technique of "L'Indifférent" is marvellous.

sional jealousy, or irritability on Gillot's side; ingratitude, sensitiveness, fickleness, or a sense of superiority on Watteau's, this mutually helpful friendship of five years ended abruptly. We may never know the cause of the quarrel, but we do know that Watteau, although he always warmly praised Gillot's work and admitted his personal indebtedness, refused to be questioned in regard to their disagreement, and was silent about it even to his most intimate friends. Curious to relate, Gillot ceased to paint when Watteau left him, and became an etcher and engraver. Watteau certainly dated the knowledge of his own talent from his association with Gillot, his first real master.

Claude Audran, to whom he went in 1708 at the age of twenty-four (taking his friends Pater and Lancret with him), was keeper or rather doorkeeper of the Luxembourg Palace, and a painter of the ornamental decorations then in vogue. Garlands and arabesques were his speciality. He taught his system of decoration to Watteau, who, sensitive to every artistic sensation, gleaned perhaps from Audran the sense of rhythmic line and made it one of his own chief characteristics.

Living in the Luxembourg Palace he had access to the pictures; he studied them, especially the works of Rubens. Restlessly he would roam the gardens of the Palace, enchanted and inspired by the figures wandering down the paths and grouping themselves under the great trees. Watteau, dallying in the gardens, remembering the theatrical methods of Métayer, the subjects of Gillot, the flexibility and fancy of Audran, the daring of the great Rubens, began to develop into an original. Gradually, too, he grew restless, feeling that he was not wholly free to paint his dreams. A vague nostalgia persuaded his artistic temperament that it was his home he wanted to see—Valenciennes and his people. Be that as it may, this was the reason he gave for leaving Audran, who had always been kind and appreciative; although the wily painter of garlands and arabesques tried to dissuade his *protégé* from painting pictures, fearing to lose so able an assistant in his own ornamental work. Before parting from Audran, Watteau made his first real essay in his second manner, a picture of "The Departure of the Troops," a reminiscence of the life at Valenciennes. This work he sold to the dealer

Sirois for sixty livres, and with the money he started for home, despite Audran's protests.

Valenciennes at that time was gay with soldiers and *dames galantes*, and Watteau painted several military pictures—groups marked with truth, yet full of grace; he also filled his sketch-books with incomparable drawings. But he could not long resist the call of Paris. Valenciennes seemed to have grown smaller, less interesting. The painter fretted in the narrow sphere of the provincial town; once again his wayward feet were set towards the capital. He arrived in Paris in 1709, and before long persuaded himself that he would like to visit Rome. With this end in view he competed for the *Prix de Rome*, but succeeded only in obtaining second prize. Soon recovering from the disappointment, he painted a companion picture to the work he had sold to Sirois for sixty livres, but for the companion he asked and obtained two hundred and sixty livres. These two pictures he borrowed from Sirois and hung in a room, where he knew they would be seen by the Academicians as they passed from one apartment to another. The painter De la Fosse, impressed by their colour

and quality, paused and asked the name of the author. He was informed that they were the work of a young and unknown man who craved intercession with the king for a "pension" in order that he might study in Italy. De la Fosse sent for Watteau, whom he found modest, shy, and deprecatory of his work. Watteau stated his desire to study abroad. He was told—the episode in these days seems hardly credible—to his astonishment and joy, that there was no need for him to study with any one; that he was already master; that he would honour the Academy if he would consent to become a member, and that he had only to present himself to be enrolled. This he did and was duly elected, the inauguration fee in consideration of his circumstances being reduced to one hundred livres. And so in 1712, at the age of twenty-eight, the poor unknown, who failed to win the first prize in the *Prix de Rome*, was made free of the Academy, was given the new title of *peintre des Fêtes Galantes*, and became, almost in a bound, famous.

Ill and moody, he worked incessantly at his drawings and the pictures which were making it possible for him eventually to produce his

masterpiece, "The Embarkment for Cythera." Always dissatisfied with his work, he did not ratify his election to the Academy by sending in his diploma picture until 1717. The patience of the Academy being exhausted, he was reminded of the rule that each newly elected member must present a picture. In a brilliant dash he finished "The Embarkment for Cythera," which was accepted on August 28, 1717, as his *pièce de reception.*

No longer was there poverty to contend with. Success followed success. The Academy had set its seal upon him. Everybody wanted Watteaus. In 1716, the year before he sent in his *pièce de reception*, he had gone to live with M. de Crozat, whose beautiful house in the Rue Richelieu and his country mansion at Montmorency were filled with works of the old masters, drawings and paintings. We are told that Crozat possessed four hundred pictures of the Venetian and Flemish schools, thousands of drawings, of which two hundred and twenty-nine were by Rubens, one hundred and twenty-nine by Van Dyck, one hundred and six by Veronese, and one hundred and thirteen by Titian. In these luxurious houses of his ad-

miring friend and patron, Watteau might have lived with delight and profit. The park of the country house at Montmorency became the background which inspired his Pastorals, the perfection of his art; this perfection the study of the old masters aided somewhat, no doubt, but Watteau was now master himself, and in knowing them confronted his peers. Here too, for the first time, he met his models as an equal—untrammelled. This man of "medium height and insignificant appearance," whose eyes showed "neither talent nor liveliness," was on familiar and friendly terms with the company gathered at M. de Crozat's house—ladies of fashion, from whom in old days he tried to steal for his note-book a line of neck, a turn of wrist, furtively and hastily, asked nothing better than to be party to his pictures in gardens gay with mondaines, male and female. He observed and painted. We can almost hear the frou-frou of their garments in his pictures.

M. de Julienne, another patron, was full of enthusiasm and eager to possess his works; it was for him that Watteau painted the replica, carried farther and more finished, of the "Embarkment

for Cythera," which is now at Potsdam. All the world smiled upon Watteau, but the world's favours only made the more capricious and melancholy this incurable brooder over the unattainable. Loving no woman as he loved his art, he longed for tenderness, yet was afraid of it. Cold, shy, fastidious, reserved, ill, he shunned society now that it sought him, and drugged himself with work as a refuge from ennui and from nostalgia for no earthly country.

He left M. de Crozat's house, independence being more vital to him than luxury, and found a companion in Nicolas Vleughels, whom he had met at M. de Julienne's. The two lived together until 1718. Once more the desire for solitude assailed him. M. de Julienne, who seems always to have been his devoted friend, admonished the ailing painter and begged him to be more careful about his material welfare, as indeed all his other friends did, to whom he retorted, "At the worst there is the hospital; no one is refused there!" His friends advised him to travel. Of all places he chose London, and arrived on these shores in 1719, finding lodgings at Greenwich.

In London his physician, Dr. Mead, pre-

sented him to the king, for whom he painted four pictures, which are now at Buckingham Palace. His health showed no improvement, and the English climate aggravated his illness. In a letter to Gersaint he wrote of "*Le mauvais air qui regne à Londres à cause de la vapeur du charbon de terre dont on fait usage.*"

Dr. Mead, aware no doubt that his condition was hopeless, advised him to return to Paris. This he did, and settled in the house of Gersaint, son-in-law to Sirois, for whom he painted the delightful picture called "Gersaint's Sign,"—"just to limber up his fingers," as he expressed it.

Restlessness again seized him. He believed that he would recover in the country. His friend the Abbé Haranger asked M. le Fèvre to find him accommodation in a house at Nogent, and thither he went in 1721.

But the end was near, and Watteau, realising it, proceeded to set his house in order and to make amends for his shortcomings of friendship and of temper, the importance of which the dying man magnified. He sent for his townsman and pupil, Pater, asked forgiveness

PLATE IV.—THE EMBARKMENT FOR CYTHERA

(In the Louvre, Paris)

In 1717 Watteau finished, after a long delay, his *pièce de reception* for the Academy, the famous first study for "The Embarkment for Cythera." This picture was painted in seven days, and elaborated, but hardly improved, in the Potsdam version. Behold these ethereal and butterfly pilgrims of love preparing lackadaisically to be wafted in the ship with the rose-coloured sail to the abode of Venus. On those lovely shores they will find no continuing city. Watteau knows that.

for having in the past retarded his advancement through fear of rivalry, and made ample amends by giving Pater daily instruction and revealing to him his intimate knowledge of his craft. Pater said, after Watteau's death, that this was "the only fruitful teaching he had ever received." His townsman no doubt brought back to the dying painter thoughts of home. Ever hopeful, like all consumptives, he was sure that a change of air would cure him!

He instructed Gersaint to sell everything, and to make preparations for the journey home. He made the journey home, but not to Valenciennes. He died suddenly in Gersaint's arms on July 18, 1721.

He was artist to the end. "Take away that crucifix," he said to the priest; "it pains me. How could an artist dare to treat my Master so shockingly." It is said that one of the last remarks of this sensitive, ill-balanced, disease-stricken man of genius was to beg the Abbé Haranger to forgive him for having used his face and figure for his picture of "Gilles."

So at the age of thirty-seven he escaped

finally from reality—that reality which his art had always avoided so delightfully and so convincingly.

II

HIS ART

Watteau's art appeals to everybody, and fascinates all who study it attentively. The lovely decorative pictures tell their own story; and for those who require more than a story in a picture, there is his craftsmanship, his originality, his personality; the delight of comparing one alluring achievement with another, and the interest in noting the inferiority of his followers —Lancret, Pater, and the rest—who annexed his manner but who could not annex the flame of his genius. Visit the Dulwich Gallery, study and enjoy Watteau's "Ball under a Colonnade," then go to Hertford House and examine Pater's copy of Watteau's "Ball." The fire of genius and glory of colour are gone. It is as stolid as Paul Potter's "Bull."

I have an especial affection for "The Ball under a Colonnade" at Dulwich; for until the regal gift of Hertford House to the nation, with its nine Watteaus, this little "Ball under

a Colonnade," and in a lesser degree its companion picture at Dulwich, a "Fête Champêtre," were my first wanderings in the lyric land of Watteau. The National Gallery which, before the present Director came into office, treated the French school with an indifference that almost amounted to disdain, does not possess a single Watteau. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Cambridge own examples of varying merit, and there is one in that treasure-house of rare and strange things, Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is probable that the nation possesses yet another example. "A Watteau in the Jones' Collection" was the surprising heading of an article in a recent number of the *Burlington Magazine* by Mr. Claude Phillips, who claims that the little Watteau-like picture called "The Swing" in the Jones' Collection at South Kensington is a veritable Watteau.

Germany is rich in Watteaus, with ten at Potsdam and five in Berlin. France, which should be the richest, is poorer in number and importance than either Germany or England, although there are ten examples in the Louvre, including the original "Embarkment

for Cythera," "L'Indifférent," and "Jupiter and Antiope."

Let us return for a moment to "The Ball under a Colonnade" at Dulwich, which from its own inherent charm and from its position in that quiet and reposeful gallery may fitly serve as an introduction to the art of Watteau. Take a chair—they permit it at Dulwich—and seat yourself before it. The picture has suffered, alas! somewhat from Time, which has almost obliterated the fairy-like fountain. But how charming the picture is still; how gracious and debonair are the two dancing figures; how fascinating the broken colour in the woman's green-striped, rose skirt and in the man's blue butterfly dress. There are seventy-three figures in the small canvas, 1 ft. $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. by 2 ft. $\frac{1}{4}$ in. You can almost hear the musicians playing, the fall of water from the fading fountain, the rustle of leaves, and the ripple of laughter. Think of the painters, dead and gone, who have loved this "Ball under a Colonnade." Constable was one of them. He was not afraid to praise a picture when he liked it. Listen to this—Constable's criticism of a copy that Leslie had made of Watteau's "Ball." He

PLATE V.—JUPITER AND ANTIOPE

(In the Louvre, Paris)

"Jupiter and Antiope" suggests Titian and Rubens filtered through Watteau. This nude studied from life, not painted from his drawings, is more laboured than his other pictures, but the loss of spontaneity in the colour is compensated by the truth and beauty of the abandon of the beautiful limbs in repose. Brown Jupiter, blonde Venus—no attenuation of the truth here—lights loaded, browns rich with pearly reflections on the fair skin.

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asked Constable what he thought of the copy, and the great man answered:—

"Your copy looks colder than the original, which seems as if painted in honey—so mellow, so tender, so soft, and so delicious; so I trust yours will be; but be satisfied if you but touch the hem of his garment, for this inscrutable and exquisite thing would vulgarise even Rubens and Paul Veronese."

The amount of work done by Watteau, accused by his friend De Caylus of idleness, was enormous. A chronological list is almost impossible, because many of his works are lost or were destroyed during the Revolution.

Watteau painted anything and everything, during his connection with Gillot and Audran, from pictures to powder-boxes, never considering that his art was too high and lofty for the embellishment of any object suitable for painting upon. His work may be divided into three classes: first manner—Italian Comedy and decorative work; second—Military Scenes; third and finest manner—The Pastorals.

As a boy he produced some military pictures, and he reverted to them while with Audran. It is difficult to place chronologically any given

subject, for while we may arbitrarily classify a picture as belonging to one period or another, his Italian Comedy scenes, belonging to the first period, persisted to the end.

With the exception of his boyish endeavours, inspired by Teniers before he visited Paris, his first manner was almost entirely decorative, and included paintings on screens, coach panels, and furniture. The military pictures belong to a short period dating from his success in selling them to Sirois and their approval by the Academy. They are few in number—thirteen only were engraved.

The year 1712 was the beginning of his recognition and the end of poverty. Between this date and 1716 he produced his marvellous nudes. Of all Watteau's pictures the nudes seem undoubtedly to have been painted from Nature and not from drawings. They are too true to life, too well observed. All his other pictures, even the greatest of his Pastorals, have the air of being imagined. His drawings were his documents, and these, like the nudes, were of course made direct from Nature. The fantasy of his pictures is founded on fact, but it is fantasy which sees only what it wishes to

see — the rhythmic line, the rainbow colour, the happy melancholy.

The year 1716 was big with significance to Watteau; he awoke in his own land— dream-land of his Pastorals. Then he began to live, and there were before him but five short years of life. He never again left this land of fantasy — except when, on his return from London, he painted "Gersaint's Sign," that model of modishness and grace, painted in eight mornings, representing Gersaint's shop where *élégantes* buy masterpieces from shop-keepers as elegant as themselves. This picture, which is now in the possession of the German Emperor, has for some mysterious reason been divided into two portions.

In 1717, as I have related, he finished after a long delay his *pièce de reception* for the Academy, the famous first study for the "Embarkment for Cythera." What can be said of this picture, or of the more finished replica at Potsdam, that has not already been said a score of times? It is referred to and described in the Prologue to this book as one of his significant pictures. It moves in a rhythm of life, of love, of colour; rose reds, golden yellows,

faint purples, greys of every gamut, meeting and melting—one perfect whole, and over all is a lingering regret of "I know not what." This picture was painted in seven days, and elaborated, but hardly improved, in the Potsdam version.

Turn from this consummate work to his early "La Vraie Gaieté," inspired by Teniers, which in essence is the same picture as "The Ball under a Colonnade" at Dulwich, and even the "Amusements Champêtres" and the "Champs Elysées" at Hertford House. The clothes are changed, the handling has become lighter and more accomplished—that is all. The observer, that saturnine, detached, cynical figure, who appears in so many of Watteau's pictures, is already present in "La Vraie Gaieté." This solitary figure is, as I have already said, the symbol of Watteau himself, ever aloof, ever contemptuous, even when sharing in the scenic world of Watteau, where life, if not really true, is certainly not false. His people are lotus-eaters, who are come to a land where it is always afternoon, where "the charmed sunset lingered low adown in the red west . . . and many a winding vale and

meadow, set with slender galingale." A mild melancholy possesses the inhabitants of this dream-world, for they are happy and yet a little sad, musing on what can never be. Through this dream-world "L'Indifférent" trips lightly, typical of Watteau, rainbow-hued, mercurial, his indifference assumed, not troubling to conceal the sad thoughtfulness that lurks in his expression. We do not believe in his snapping fingers and his jaunty air. What colour are his beautiful garments? Rosy white, greeny white, lavendar white with rose red knots, and rose red mantle lined with bluebell blue, white frills falling over the sensitive hands, his butterfly decorations rustling as he passes—"L'Indifférent." The technique of the picture, in its modern chromatic use of colour, is marvellous. The hues of the rainbow meander through it all. Who can describe Watteau's colour or his fashion of trickling on the paint, as fascinating in its way as the method of Frans Hals, whose seduction is "the way he paints," not what he paints? Hals, the great master of character, frank, open, plebeian, is akin in technique to Watteau. What æsthetic joy these masters of technique give us as we

study the manipulation of their paint. Hals flicks on his ruffles frankly, joyously—brutally. Watteau, seemingly just for joy in the colour, trickles—there is no other word for it—one luscious colour over another, like liquid jewels embedded in gold. One may stand for hours at Hertford House in front of any of his pictures and quite forget the subject in delight of the workmanship.

Consider "The Music Lesson." In colour it is rose and white. The man's garments are neither rose, nor white, nor yellow, and yet they are all three. The rose of the woman's rosette repeats the carmines of her complexion. The composition is charming. The movement, pose, and costume of the players is the same as the musicians in the "Musical Party," also at Hertford House. Delightful too in "Gilles and His Family." Gilles is dressed in thin, white, supple satin, lined with rose and striped with faint blue, and his white mantle is lined with blue. The dark bias of the guitar binds the group of people together, all of whom it touches or crosses. A seated woman nurses a little black and white dog, while a child nestles up to her, peeping beneath the guitar; the

faces are more alert and smiling than usual, and the picture, although less pearly than "The Music Lesson," is not less beautiful in colour.

"Jupiter and Antiope" at the Louvre suggests Titian and Rubens filtered through Watteau. This nude studied from life, not painted from his drawings, is more laboured than his other pictures, but the loss of spontaneity in the colour is compensated by the truth and beauty of the abandon of the beautiful limbs in repose. Brown Jupiter, blonde Venus—no attenuation of the truth here—lights loaded, browns rich, with pearly reflections on the fair skin.

The attribution of the delightful "Pastoral" at the Louvre, although generally accepted, has been questioned. The elegant little lady shepherdess is in rose red, a red that seems to belong only to Velazquez and to Watteau; she sits watching, not the flock of one sheep and one wondering dog, no! she is listening to the Arcadian shepherd playing his flute. Very Watteau-like is the landscape.

Turn from these little works to the larger pictures, such as "The Return from the Chase," painted for his patron M. de Julienne towards

the end of his life—a marvel of rhythmic line and tone; and to "Les Amusements Champêtres"—a bouquet of colour like no other colour, old rose, old blue, silvery yellow, prune purple, all partaking one of the other. In the distance people are sitting and standing and dancing in colours unrivalled.

So we may pass through the whole range of his production finding constantly some new surprise of colour, some new mastery in the weaving of his webs. Call Watteau, if you like, a painter of the frivolous side of life, but you must also call him one of the few originals whose pictures vivify because they stimulate, and because they excite interest in his method which marked a new epoch in art. "We consider Watteau," says his countryman, M. Camille Mauclair, "the most original and most representative master of French art; Watteau, Delacroix, and Monet are the three beacons of that art."

III

HIS PLACE IN ART: PREDECESSORS AND INFLUENCE

If I were asked what new thing Watteau gave to the world, I would answer that he

PLATE VI.—THE FOUNTAIN

(In the Wallace Collection)

One of his smaller pictures, 17½ ins. high by 13¼ wide, called also "La Cascade." It attracts attention by reason of the somewhat theatrical way in which the dainty silhouette of the figures is set against the opening between the trees. But how charming are these figures bathed in light and mirrored in the pool that ripples at their feet.

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humanised the art of his country and century, and drew men from pomposity to his own intimate and dream-like reality under the symbols of gallantry and masquerade. He was also the pioneer of impressionism, the discoverer of the decomposition of tones, and the link, to quote M. Mauclair, that connects Ruysdael and Claude Lorrain with Turner, Monticelli, and Claude Monet.

The eighteenth century in France which he inaugurated is a sunlit garden full of flowers compared to a cold court in some prison palace, to which the seventeenth century of academic imitation of the lesser Italians may be likened. Correct, pompous, lifeless, Le Brun, Le Sueur, and his other forerunners, have left us little but a sense of boredom, a warning how not to paint, and the assurance that, unless a school is founded on a personal study of Nature, that school dies with its founder. The decadence of Italian art is said to date from Raphael. Certain it is that bombastic art dates from the greatest artist—Michelangelo. The father of the chromo is Correggio.

Watteau, a "little master," as some are pleased to call him, has had an influence on

art that persists to-day, an influence intimate and human. Certainly he made life more beautiful. Departing for Cythera with Watteau's dames and gallants means more to us of intelligence in art than acres of classic pictures of gods, temples and heroes untouched by the warmth of personality and incisiveness of observation. We are fatigued and unconvinced in the rooms at the Louvre devoted to Le Sueur's series of pictures depicting the life of St. Bruno. We are glad before the little earnest portraits of Corneille, Clouet, and Fouquet hanging in the next room. The love of beauty and the simple religion of the Primitives is transferred to us. We feel it to be true that "Nothing can wash the balm from an anointed king," in looking at the portrait of Charles I., king, dandy, and gentleman, touched as it is with Van Dyck's great gift of personal vision; but Le Sueur and Le Brun say nothing, except perhaps to make us grudge the wall space their pictures occupy.

Watteau is the lure that led France back to Nature; his real-unreal pleasances are the gardens where grew the flowers (slips from older stock, if you will) called Modern Move-

ment, Impressionism, and Pointillism. "The Embarkment for Cythera" has been called the first impressionist picture. Once again through Watteau the natural art of the North prevailed over the art of the South as in the time of the Burgundian Franco-Flemish renaissance.

Watteau is true successor to his masters Teniers and Rubens. Teniers' subjects may be said to persist to the end of his short but full artistic life, and his *Fêtes Galantes*, those perfect expressions of his matured art, are Teniers' subjects made his own; but the uncouth Flemish peasants become graceful dames and gallants. Teniers' boors rollick through the day and night boisterously, leaving nothing for to-morrow, unless it be a headache. Watteau's dames and gallants are touched with happy melancholy. Their light malady of heartache for unattained desires is obviously more beautiful pictorially than the headaches of hilarious boors.

Your true artist has delicate *antennæ* and is sensitive to everything that he sees and feels; but when he retires within himself, the memory of all that he felt, of warmth or cold,

fine or unfine, returns to him. The influence of many men Watteau felt. I place them in the order of their influence—Teniers, Rubens, Gillot, Audran, Titian, and Veronese. The example of each taught him something, but the artist in him selected ingredients of their genius and combined them into a new and original one—his own.

The wholesome influence of Rubens on painters has been enormous. He did not make imitators, but he inspired many great men to "get the look of their own eyes," not the look of his; robust, normal, and generous of nature, the contagion of his truth is so immediate that all who come in contact with it must look at Nature unblinkingly, and receive a fresh impulse from his bravery. Velazquez was a better painter after he had talked and worked on the hillside above the Escorial with Rubens; Van Dyck was his pupil, and Watteau is of his artistic progeny. The feminine taste of Velazquez, Van Dyck, and Watteau was made more virile by contact with Rubens, whose taste many of us may condemn, and whose influence for good we are so apt to overlook.

From Titian Watteau borrowed warmth,

and from Veronese coolness of colour; Gillot, the decorative painter, showed him his own inherent power; Audran, too, helped him, and the Luxembourg Gardens and Gallery aided his artistic development.

No doubt the great artist might be shut in a cell, and still his genius would bring forth its work unnourished by influence or propinquity to other talents; it might even show a rarer quality. But ninety-nine in a hundred derive from their forebears, and it is interesting to follow the career of a great man, to pursue the influences that formed him, and to see in the end how his individuality asserted itself. It were churlish in any student and lover of Watteau not to know and acknowledge the happy effect upon him of the masters he admired.

Watteau was of Flemish origin, for Valenciennes, where he was born, became French only seven years before his birth. Conquest cannot in seven years change the characteristics of a people. Watteau's art is consequently distinctly Flemish, but modified by French taste; he became an artistic composite of Flemish technical sanity and French intelli-

gence and fervour. He was an exotic that shot up in the forcing-house of his exacting genius, extracting vitality from Rubens the fertiliser, inspiration from Teniers, colour from Titian and Veronese, and encouragement from Gillot and Audran. Genius is a great gift lent by Nature to the few; but Nature is inexorable in demanding the return of the fruits of the gift, as if man were but a casket for its safe keeping; when the end comes he must have proved his worth as custodian, be the time long, as in the case of a Da Vinci or a Michaelangelo, or short, as in the case of a Raphael or a Watteau.

The shorter the time given for the justification of the gift the stronger often is the capacity for effort, so that the sum total of the achievement of the short life often seems to exceed that of the long life.

Michaelangelo lived to be very old. When this "greatest artist" died he left his work unfinished. Raphael died young, but his achievement was prodigious. Watteau's short sad life of illness and discontent produced more than twelve hundred items.

Watteau began his artistic career influenced

in technique by the *petits toucheurs*, the sympathetic little masters of the Netherlands to whom he was kin (M. de Julienne calls him in his catalogue "*peintre Flamand de L'Academie Royale*"). Soon the big touch of Rubens intrudes and the technique broadens; next Titian obsesses him, and the shadows under the trees in the Luxembourg Gardens as he watches grow warmer to the watcher, and colour begins to glow; Veronese intervenes, and cooler tones are apparent—and these three great masters of breadth and truth, of warmth and temperament, of chill stateliness, combine in the mind's eye of Watteau. The pleasant places in the gardens of the Luxembourg are peopled with ladies and gallants and "little ladies" and "little gallants," and, as he walks and watches, Teniers' subjects flit across his vision, and the forms of Rubens' rosy and ample matrons.

How would Titian have painted yonder dark woman of the warm colour and deep red hair walking down the glade? The leaves on the trees rustle in the summer air. Light flickers on silken frocks, cold reflections on green. Something whispers to his discontent "paint

the scene as you see it," draw the lady sitting on the grass, her back toward you, in the shot silk frock of bronze and green, and the other standing near, tall and elegant, in rose and yellow. What colour is it? "The colour of a sun-browned wood-nymph's thigh." And her hands behind her back. What hands! "Hands must be better painted than heads, being more difficult."

Beyond in the gardens fountains and little children play; tall trees throw shadows on beauty pouting, the indifferent lover tip-toes away, not so indifferent as he would have the pouting one believe. There is movement toward the gates of the Palace Gardens; children run tripping over tiny dogs led by lute string ribbons; soldiers and music.

Watteau finds himself, not wholly perhaps, but the formative period has passed. The artist is made; is himself, gives himself. No longer will the classicists prevail; no longer will art be cold and eclectic. The youth from Valenciennes will call Paris back to Nature, and through a temperament will show the world familiar things, will let his imagination play, taking his good where he finds it, but resolving

PLATE VII.—FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE

(In the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh)

Bleak Edinburgh is rich in the possession of this picture of dreamy colour. The hour is sunset; the place is where you will, but the title, "Fête Champêtre," suits the scene of dalliance quite as well as any other name; a similar picture at Dresden is called by M. Mauclair "The Terrace Party." You perceive here the typical Watteau figures, and behind is a landscape that has all the idealistic charm of his rendering of Nature.

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it into something that is his own. He will see with his own eyes. He will paint pictures as he pleases.

When Watteau, perhaps unknown to himself, resolved to be himself, a new school was born in France, a school whose influence still prevails. We are fond of taking credit to ourselves for the initiation of the modern school of landscape. We remember with pride the day in 1824 when the French Salon was illumined with three of Constable's pictures; we also remember the acknowledgment by French painters of the inspiration of Turner and Bonnington; but it would be interesting to follow back their inspiration; and it would not be difficult to trace Monet's division of tones and envelope of air to Watteau.

Influence in art and inspiration is a ball that is tossed back and forth. If Constable, Turner, and Bonnington influenced the French school they owe allegiance to Watteau, and through him to "the bull in art," Rubens, who was master to Van Dyck, the founder of the English school.

Does Gainsborough's lovely "Perdita" in the Wallace Collection owe nothing of its exquisite

femininity, sweet melancholy, and woodland background, to Watteau? Constable and Turner were but paying old debts, for the painter of the *Fêtes Galantes* had shown the beauty of landscape and made it something more than a setting for figures. He taught also that Nature is intimate and familiar with accidental beauty of sunlight and twilight, misty horizons, and lovable little things near to us; not swept and garnished and coldly unreal, but a world where human beings may wander happily with Nature on a level with their own eyes; not a world where only Titans and gods roam through pseudo-classical scenes.

In Watteau's pictures poetry and reality dwell in harmony. He proved their compatibility; he showed that all the world is a vision seen through a temperament.

It is unjust to attribute to Watteau's influence only the frivolous school of painters which immediately followed him; they were incidents of the reaction of their time against the dull and the pedantic. They copied him, but they missed his sincerity; they lacked his genius; they were begotten of their age when dulness tired of being good and grew wanton. But

even his followers have more of life and warmth and beauty than his predecessors, the frigid and attenuated school of Le Brun. Fragonard is a master and lives; we are rising to a new appreciation of him; and Pater and Lancret do not tire us even if they are "soulless Watteaus." Le Brun and his school are dead, and must one day be buried in the cellars of the Louvre to make way for their betters—the painters inspired by the Flemish Frenchman—Antoine Watteau—who made possible the modern school. From him Constable, Turner, Gainsborough, Corot, Manet and Monet derived. What an achievement for a short life of thirty-seven years!

IV

HIS CRITICS AND ADMIRERS

Most critics of Watteau allow something of his rhythmic sense and beauty of colour to tinge their appreciations. Ordinary statements of facts seem inadequate to express the feeling he evokes, whether the writer be concerned with the "outwardness" of his genius, like the brothers De Goncourt, or the "inwardness" of

it, like M. Camille Mauclair. Instinctively language becomes flowery, and light and lovely words rise spontaneously to re-echo in another medium the music of his pictures.

According to our temperament and taste we are influenced by the familiar-and-candid friend standpoint of De Caylus; by the De Goncourts' searching analysis clothed in apt and sparkling words; by M. Camille Mauclair's soul-search into the effect on Watteau's life of the disease from which he suffered, or by the calm and cultivated mind of Walter Pater with its rare and sympathetic insight, and that "tact of omission" which he extolls in Watteau.

The source of all the biographies is the memoir of the Comte de Caylus, which was lost from the archives of the Academy, and discovered by the brothers De Goncourt in a second-hand book-shop. While we are grateful for the information De Caylus's memoir contains, we can but smile at the judgment of a friend and admirer on a contemporary so far in advance of his age as Watteau. Solemn De Caylus entirely failed to understand the real man and artist. Apart from the details he gives of Watteau's life, the passages which de-

scribe his method of work are the most interesting. He informs us that Watteau could never be an heroic or allegorical painter (thank Heaven!), not being trained academically; he also tells us that his reflections on painting were profound, and that his execution was inferior to his ideas; that he had no knowledge of anatomy, having hardly ever drawn from the nude, so that he neither understood it nor was able to express it. De Caylus also calls Watteau "mannered," but admits that he was endowed with charm, and so on, and so on. Watteau's nudes are studied, and, what is more, achieved. Recall any one of them, "The Toilet," "Antiope," "The Judgment of Paris"—they are as documentary as his drawings. The values and reflected lights of his nude bodies are academic enough to satisfy a modern student at Julian's, the most carping and exacting of critics.

De Caylus, while deploring Watteau's methods of technique, contributes the interesting information that he preferred to use his paints liquid; that he rubbed his pictures all over with oil and repainted over this surface; also that he was slovenly in his habits, rarely cleaning his palette, and allowing days to pass

without setting it afresh; that his pot of medium was full of dirt and dust and the sediment of used colours, and that he was idle and indolent.

Well, as to Watteau's methods, I prefer to think that the surface of oil while it mellows preserves also. The worst artists are often the most solicitous of their mediums, and the laborious industry of the mediocre painter is often laborious idleness. A man who can leave behind him, after a short life, the quality and quantity of work bequeathed to the world by Watteau refutes, by that work, accusations of indolence and idleness. Neither can I admit that he was mannered. His manner was different from the clique of painters then in vogue, and it is obvious that he had a manner, but this very manner is his originality. Of course his pictures are "invented," but invented from the accumulated facts of his own drawings, wrested from life hurriedly, for he had very little time, and yet showing no marks of haste. If, as M. Mauclair says, "There exists in intellectual consumptives a condition of mind which seems to concentrate all those preceptions of supreme delicacy conferred on noble minds by

the presentiment of approaching death," we need not grieve that the lives of such men as Keats, Watteau, and Schubert were short. "The body's disease caused a mystic exaltation in the soul, whose productions, far from being touched by debility or decadence, are rather the concentration of extreme power and violent emotion." This intelligent and sympathetic critic goes on to say that the very unwholesomeness of body is marked by "unmistakable health of mind," which may indeed be a "courageous facing of earthly finality," but is also a fertile field in which great enterprises are undertaken and achieved.

As I have said, according to your temperament you may take Watteau seriously, lightly, joyously or sadly. There is recompense whether you feel that he is the great and profound master M. Mauclair calls him, or whether you range yourself with the De Goncourts, who describe him as "a painter of Utopias, a beautifier, the most amiable and determined of liars, a painter of pictures where the fiddles of Lérida play marches that lead the way to death, where smart La Tulipe struts and swaggers, and Manon flirts between two gun shots, and a

host of little love-birds flutter, light-heartedly, into war's stern discipline."

The De Goncourts note that there is in Watteau's work "murmurs of vague and slow harmony behind the laughing words," and that a "musical sadness gently contagious exhales from these *Fêtes Galantes*. Like the seduction of Venice, I know not what veiled poetry breathes sweet and low to our charmed senses."

M. Mauclair asserts that no one has ever understood Watteau so well as Verlaine, and that "his exquisite little volume of poems *Fêtes Galantes* is an absolute transposition of the painter's work"; but it is the brilliant appreciation of the De Goncourts that has had the strongest influence on subsequent writers, so admirably do they reveal Watteau, so like the colour of his pictures are the colours of their words, so adequate is their exposition of one side of Watteau's fascination. They claim Watteau as the great poet of the eighteenth century, and then proceed to give in glittering prose a penetrating and persuasive criticism, apostrophising Watteau's art as "a country refreshed by fountains, decorated with marbles and statues, and peopled by naiades, a country

PLATE VIII.—THE MUSIC LESSON

(In the Wallace Collection)

Watteau, seemingly just for joy in the colour, trickles—there is no other word for it—one luscious colour over another, like liquid jewels embedded in gold. The colour fascinates. Is it rose and white? The man's garments are neither rose, nor white, nor yellow, and yet they are all three. The rose of the woman's rosette repeats the carmines of her complexion. The composition is charming.

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lovable and radiant, far from a jealous world, where baskets of flowers swing from bending trees; where fields are full of music, gardens full of roses and tangled vines; a France where the pines of Italy grow, where villages are gay with weddings, coaches, ceremonies and festal attire, and violins and flutes conduct to a *temple Jesuite* the marriage of Nature and the Opera."

"*La Mode de Watteau*—that divine tailor whose artist scissors have fashioned playfully the delight in disorder, the morning *négligé*, and the beautiful ceremonious garments of the afternoon. Fairy scissors dowering the times to come with fashions from the 'Thousand and One Nights.' Beribboned scissors of Watteau, what a delightful realm of coquetry you cut from the bigoted realm of the Maintenon!"

How different in manner and method is Walter Pater's "Imaginary Portrait," called "A Prince of Court Painters: Extracts from an old French Journal." Calmly this subtle analysis begins, which shows a deeper insight into the personality of Watteau than either the brothers De Goncourt, or M. Mauclair, who calls

Pater's "Imaginary Portrait" a "whimsical interpretation." I have read many books about the painter of the *Fêtes Galantes*, but I always return to Pater's "whimsical portrait," for it gives the very atmosphere of his artistic descent and development, from the age of seventeen to the last year of his life. Missing no dominant event, misusing no legends, cast in the form of a diary, the narrative is made convincingly real by Pater's sympathetic imagination.

These extracts are from an imaginary old French Journal, kept apparently by an elder sister of Jean Baptiste Pater, Watteau's pupil. This lonely and sensitive lady, who has evidently lost her cloistral heart to the unconcerned painter, is living in Valenciennes, Watteau's birthplace. The first entry is dated:—

"VALENCIENNES, *September* 1701.

"They have been renovating my father's large workroom. . . . Among old Watteau's work-people came his son, 'the genius,' my father's godson and namesake, a dark-haired youth, whose large, unquiet eyes seemed perpetually wandering to the various drawings which lie exposed here. My father will have

it that he is a genius indeed and a painter born. . . . And just where the crowd was busiest young Antony was found, hoisted into one of those empty niches of the old *Hôtel de Ville*, sketching the scene to the life, but with a kind of grace—a marvellous tact of omission, as my father pointed out to us, in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's own window—which has made trite old Harlequin, Clown, and Columbine seem like people in some fairy-land. . . . His father will hear nothing of educating him as a painter."

"*October* 1701.

"Chiefly through the solicitations of my father, old Watteau has consented to place Antony with a teacher of painting here. . . . Ah! such gifts as his, surely, may once in a way make much industry seem worth while. . . . He is apt, in truth, to fall out too hastily with himself and what he produces. . . . Yes! I could fancy myself offended by a sort of irony which sometimes crosses the half melancholy sweetness of manner habitual with him; only that, as I can see, he treats himself to the same quality."

So this gentle woman continues to record in her diary, as if musing on the life of one she loved, the salient happenings in Antony Watteau's career. Nothing escapes Walter Pater's sympathy and understanding, so that at the end we come to a perfect appreciation of his reading of Watteau. This essay, in the form of a journal, is a little masterpiece about a "little master." Under August 1705 we find the following:—

"Antony, looking well, in his new-fashioned, long-skirted coat, and taller than he really is, made us bring our cream and wild strawberries out of doors, ranging ourselves according to his judgment (for a hasty sketch in that big pocket-book he carries) on the soft slope of one of those fresh spaces in the wood, where the trees unclose a little, while Jean-Baptiste and my younger sister danced a minuet on the grass, to the notes of some strolling lutanist, who had found us out. He is visibly cheerful at the thought of his return to Paris, and became for a moment freer and more animated than I have ever yet seen him, as he discoursed to us about the paintings of Peter Paul Rubens in the church here."

Under August 1717 she writes: "Methinks Antony Watteau reproduces that gallant world, those patched and powdered ladies and fine cavaliers, so much to its own satisfaction, partly because he despises it; if this be a possible condition of excellent artistic production—he dignifies, by what in him is neither more nor less than a profound melancholy, the essential insignificance of what he wills to touch in all that, transforming its mere prettiness into grace. It looks certainly very graceful, fresh, animated, 'piquant,' as they love to say—yes! and withal, I repeat, perfectly pure, and may well congratulate itself on the loan of a fallacious grace not its own."

We are shown his restless nostalgia, his progress, success, and journeying to and fro, his broidery of the world he painted, until, as she says of a summer, "a kind of infectious sentiment passed upon us, like an efflux from its flowers and flower-like architecture."

"*January* 1720.

"Those sharply-arched brows, those restless eyes which seem larger than ever—something that seizes on one, and is almost terrible, in

his expression—speak clearly, and irresistibly set one on the thought of a summing up of his life."

And then the end under date July 1721:—

"Antony Watteau departed suddenly, in the arms of M. Gersaint, on one of the late hot days of July. At the last moment he had been at work upon a crucifix for the good *curé* of Nogent, liking little the very rude one he possessed. He died with all the sentiments of religion.

"He has been a sick man all his life. He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all."

EPILOGUE

The greatest gift in art is personality. But all masters are not of equal personality. Indeed, so rare is the gift in its fulness, that in the whole field of art there are but a few who appear as planets in the monotony of sidereal excellence.

Luminous examples of this quality of personality are such originals as Donatello, Holbein,

Vermeer of Delft, and Watteau, to mention only a few of the most lovable. That something in an artist which finds a new way to express an old thing is the rarest and most to be desired of gifts. This gift Watteau had in the highest degree. He originated a grace unsurpassed in its way—dare I say it?—even by the Greeks. Attic simplicity of grace is grander, but not more beautiful, not more intimately beautiful. The Greeks gave us the grand beauty of form; Watteau gives us the beauty of caprice, of frills and fripperies; but his people are adorned by garments that lend them grace; his women walking are rhythmical lines, sitting they are silhouettes of delight, their garments enhancing beauty, not hiding it.

Watteau is the great master of the eighteenth century in France, a century distinctly feminine. To say that he is the most feminine painter that ever lived is in no sense a disparagement, for to this quality of grace and daintiness, of coquetry and caprice, of melancholy and longing, was united a very masculine quality of craft and originality in craft.

We tingle with delight in looking at his luscious colour and studying the mastery of its

application. What artist has not known the envious desire to possess one of his drawings, the part of his achievement which entitles him to be ranked with the greatest, so truthful, so full of subtle distinction of line, whether it be a blackamoor's face or a beauty's back.

The origin of the broken tone in modern art is his. From him we may trace the modern impressionist movement, and from him modern pointillism. What is impressionism, and what is pointillism?

Impressionism is the elimination of the little, the giving of the large truth, the instantaneous impression of vision; but all vision is not the same, and as the lens of the looking eye varies, so the impression will vary. We may teach ourselves to see little or much, our memory may be accurate or false, according to our gifts. Emerson says: "Our difference of wit appears to be only a difference of impressionability or power to appreciate faint, fainter, and infinitely faintest voices and visions." This faculty of seeing at the first glance "faint, fainter, and infinitely faintest," the impressionist claims. He may be so impressionable, or so little capable of sensitiveness to impression,

that his picture in one instance may be fuller of fine truths than the most laborious idleness of finish can make it, and in the other his lack of sensitiveness to impression may be a mere jumble of decomposed colour understood only by himself.

Pointillism is the application of pure colour to the canvas in small streaks or dots, and has become part of the doctrine of the impressionists. To them it represents the decomposition of light; the streak and dot—broken colour—is used to increase the appearance of the vibration of light, which it does in a marvellous manner. The use of broken colour was one of Watteau's characteristics, and is part of the charm and originality of his technique.

Even his inconsistencies have charm. His drawings were from the life; his nudes were also from the life, so true to Nature are they, so very modern as to reflection and value, with the added Watteau grace. But, let me confess it, the modern craftsman more wedded to truth than inspiration may feel less conviction of his greatness in examining his pictures because, admire his colour and technique as much as we will, we cannot but feel that in his "in-

vented" pictures Watteau's inspiration is what the student in France calls *chic*. And yet who would have them different? His Pastorals may be "*chic'd*," but there they are, done—unrivalled, supreme.

Eighteenth-century art in France means, for most of us, Watteau. He is the fitting master of a century in which women played so great a part. He did not immortalise any woman. No Mona Lisa, no Giovanna Tornabuoni, no Emma Lady Hamilton, lives through his brush. He immortalised women—not any particular woman; he created a type, the Watteau type—adorable, dainty, and fragrant as a flower. She has no name, no place of abode since Watteau died. He saw her in his dream-life, held her for a moment as she flitted past, so she remains: eternally young, eternally free.

"Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
The song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
She cannot fade, ...
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"

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